

THE WAR OF SOCIETY'S THREE EXCLUSIVE SETS.

By Cholly Knickerbocker.

There is, as a rule, but little record of the plans of society for Christmas week, but this year, for a change, society will devote most of the "peace on earth" season to watching some very interesting social squabbles among themselves—details of which are here:

New York.

Society just now is in a very peculiar state of mix-up. I have alluded to the subject of sets on a previous occasion.

Five sets now have been arranged, and of these five three claim to be the only exclusives. Now and then a member of one set is seen at the entertainment of another, but that is, if the simile may be pardoned, like a cat in a strange garret.

ent condition of New York society. She was a refined, gentle woman, the very type of the grande dame. I know she would shrink from the hurly burly of 1900. Mrs. Astor has tried in vain to stand in, but it has been too much for her, and Mrs. John Jacob Astor is absolutely indifferent.

THE first signal of the formation of the new set is the series of dinner dances which will commence shortly after January. These dances will be given by Mrs. Ogden Mills, Mrs. Frederick Gallatin, Mrs. Levi P. Morton, Mrs. Gerry and Mrs. Starr Miller. The leaders of this set, called the Exclusives of Exclusives, have been busy weeding out any one objectionable to them. It is more or less a family affair. Mrs. Starr Miller was a Miss Warren, and is a sister of Mrs. Robert Goebel. Mrs. Frederick Gallatin was a Miss Gerry, and Mrs. Ogden Mills a Miss Livingston and a first cousin of Mrs. Gerry. In order to form this combination the Gerrys and the Gallatins, who have been at odds for some years, have evidently made it up. Mrs. John Jacob Astor would have been of the number but for her trip abroad, and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., is in mourning. This set owes its origin really to the efforts some years ago of Mrs. Perry Belmont, when she was Mrs. Henry Sloane, and when her term of mourning is completed she will doubtless be included in the list of hostesses. Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish's name does not appear, as practically she belongs to another set.

MRS. OLIVER H. P. BELMONT is the leader of another exclusive set. Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs takes her position in this, and she is followed by Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Burke-Rosch, Mrs. Charles Childs and Mrs. Stickney. Some of these names are a bit new to the general public as "society leaders." Mrs. Charles Childs was formerly Mrs. Fosdick, and she was a Miss Clark, of Tarrytown. She is a handsome woman, with a fund of good humor, and a general favorite. Her husband, Charlie Childs, is a cousin of Hermann Oelrichs, and originally came from Brooklyn. Mrs. Childs and Mrs. Oelrichs have been devoted to each other, and together they have drifted into a species of combined leadership. Mrs. Childs is a very well read woman and a good musician, and she thus appeals to Mrs. Oliver Belmont. Mrs. Stickney is a tall blonde, also handsome and very vivacious. She is one of the best dressed women in New York. She was a Miss Foster. Mr. Stickney is a millionaire several times over. He is a member of the Union, Metropolitan and many other clubs. The Stickneys entertain in princely style, and every Summer and Autumn have large parties on their yacht and on their special car. I believe Stickney is connected with the Coal Trust, but I would hardly call Mrs. Stickney's glittering parade of jewels black diamonds. Mrs. George Crocker and Mrs. John R. Drexel are also members of this set.

THE spectacle of a Fish on a fence is possibly not correct from a scientific point of view, but just at present Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish is a social mugwump. She knows that the set of which Mrs. Oliver Belmont is a leader is very much jollier and much more interesting than the family party of Gerrys and Gallatins, with a dash of Astor and Wilson. Like Uncle Remus—and I do not want to be disrespectful, but I only mean it by way of an allegory—she is "laying low," and no one seems to know into which swim she will cast her lot. And now Tuxedo and Westchester have joined hands, and Mrs. Ollie Harriman and Mrs. Tremor Park and Mrs. Suffern Tallier and others have formed a very jolly little set of their own. Into this Mrs. George De Forest has made occasional excursions, although

ON Thursday Miss Grace Ballard, a very tall, stunning looking girl, will have a coming-out dance, given her by her mother, Mrs. Frederick Edwin Ballard, at Sherry's. And these, with a few dancing class meetings, a few teas and a musicale at Mrs. Robert Hoe's on Thursday, will constitute the programme for the week. Wednesday and Friday nights at the opera will be very fashionable. The series of dinners which are given by Mrs. Fish, Mrs. Gerry and Mrs. Drexel will continue, and Mrs. Townsend Burden, who has not been seen much in society this Winter, will also give a dinner.

CHRISTMAS in society otherwise is celebrated after the English fashion. As few people as possible stop in town; the hotels and restaurants are deserted, and even the opera suffers, and there are vacant boxes in the parterre and grand tier. It is a convenient night for many people to send boxes to their friends, and you are apt to see strange faces. There will be the usual amount of Christmas dining to-morrow, and at several houses are old-fashioned Christmas celebrations. At Mrs. Robert G. Remsen's new home on Eighty-fourth street, near Fifth avenue, there will be a family gathering, as well as at Mrs. Maturin Deland's, Mrs. Parsons's, Mrs. Elbridge T. Gerry's and Mrs. Frederic Condit's. Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs will give a dinner in the afternoon to a number of poor children, a charity in which Master Oelrichs is personally interested. She will have a large dinner at night. Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont and other prominent women will also entertain. Mrs. Astor and Colonel and Mrs. John Jacob Astor will have a Christmas dinner for the family. Mrs. Willing is now visiting Mrs. Astor, and will be one of the party. Colonel and Mrs. John Jacob Astor sail for Europe shortly after New Year's.

THE George Goulds' Christmas has been a gorgeous celebration. It began on the day of the theatricals, and will last until Tuesday. It is the apotheosis which years of waiting has accomplished. Mrs. George Gould has been received into the bosom of society. Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish and Elsha Dyer, Jr., have celebrated the event by dancing in the halls of the great palace at Lakewood, and in their train tripped two hundred of the elect, irrespective of clique or former family differences. The Gould hospitality levels all ranks, and the lions and the lambs—otherwise in society known as the divorced—and their former life partners sat down to the banquet side by side and indulged in the good cheer of the merry Yuletide. Mrs. Gould renewed her histrionic triumphs in a delicious little play written for her by a lady of Knickerbocker descent, and Emily Hoffman repeated her Spanish dance, given with much applause at other houses on the fashionable circuit, including "The Strollers" and Howard Constable's studio. It was one of the most magnificent affairs ever given in this country, and it surpassed in expenditure both the famous Bradley Martin ball and the now historic Vanderbilt ball of a quarter of a century ago. Whether Mrs. George Gould—a woman of culture and domestic tastes, as well as fashionable proclivities, a rare combination these days—will care for the tawdry triumph of an entrance into the social paradise, through the gates of which many unquiet spirits of peris have peered and yearned for entrance in vain, is a question to be solved. When the Goulds accomplish anything they do it brilliantly. The Castellanes gave a magnificent fete in Paris, Helen Gould is most munificent in her charities and on Christmas Day Mrs. Howard Gould, who has yet to be included in the band of the socially elect, will

of the most indefatigable visitors, as were also Richard Wilson, John Jacob Astor, Bayard Cutting, Jimmie Gerard and Freddie Baldwin. Two debutantes were most noticeable—Miss Crocker, of California, who was with Mrs. Ogden Mills and Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, and Miss Eleanor Thomas, who was chaperoned by Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs. Much ado was made over Mrs. Oelrichs's illness on Wednesday. She felt a little faint, and left the opera box early in the evening. Mrs. Childs and Mrs. Stickney, who were with her, returned and reported that she was not seriously affected. On Friday evening Mrs. John R. Drexel was most brilliant with many jewels. Lady Colebrook, who was in the Whitney box at all performances, was one of the most beautiful women in the house. She has adopted a peculiar posture of lounge, leaning back half way into the other box. It was very picturesque and fascinating, but it was amusing after the first evening to watch other women try to imitate it. Mrs. George Crocker's musicale on Tuesday was also a very charming event. The music was excellent, and the house abso-

Society Leaders of Philadelphia.

MRS. RUSSELL E. TVCKER

MISS ELEANOR WILLING



MISS LOUISE PATTERSON



MISS VIOLET RIDGWAY



MISS MARY REAKIRT



MRS. C. EMORY McMICHAEL



MRS. HORACE PETTIT



MRS. THOMAS ROBB, JR.

her place of old was with Mrs. Oelrichs. Willie Vanderbilt is very partial to these people, who are banded just now, and who are more exclusive than anybody else. The Vanderbilts, when they emerge from their mourning, will, with the exception possibly of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, go with this set, as there will be a deep undercurrent of sympathy for the Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., with the Gerry-Gallatin combination, and in the Oliver Belmont coterie "no Vanderbilts need apply." Mrs. Maturin Deland, Mrs. De Poyster, Mrs. Courland Jay and numerous other Knickerbockers have formed themselves into a fourth set. There are so many daughters to marry in this set that the barriers are frequently let down so that young men who can dance and young men who have incomes can enter. The result is a little astonishing in reading over the lists, and one wonders at the old people one will meet at the houses of those who ought to be by tradition and blood and ancestry the leaders of New York society. And then there are little crowds connected with the various dancing classes, and then finally a lot of the unattached and unidentified, who, perhaps, free from the petty jealousies and family jars and feuds, are the happiest of all.

CHRISTMAS week is never very gay in society. There are not many entertainments on the tapis. The first very large dance of note is that to be given by Mrs. John R. Drexel on the 8th at Sherry's. This is some time off. There will be any number of children's and college dances this coming week. The youngsters all have their sets and their cliques. They go to one of several fashionable dancing schools meeting usually at Sherry's or at one of the small halls and presided over by Miss Robinson, Miss Preston and other well-known young women. The children's private dances take place in the afternoon generally, and cards are out for a series. The young women who will be out in a year or two have their dances at the Metropolitan Club. There are as many as three separate sets meeting there for this purpose. One is the old Knickerbocker contingent, the other the Brookings and Bryces and a third the Millises and Sloanes.

ON Tuesday evening Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes gives a bal poudre at her residence, No. 229 Madison avenue. This dance is in honor of her youngest daughter, who made her debut this Winter. All the young women and men will be in semi-fancy dress, with powdered hair. It will not be a very large dance, and the set represented will be composed principally of the Lenox contingent. Miss Bryce and Miss Gurnee, who received with Miss Stokes at her coming-out, will be among the debutantes.

MISS FACHINI will give a dance the same evening. At this one will meet many of the Italians and the French colony. It will also be a small dance. On the 27th Mrs. Bayard Dominick will give a large dance for her youngest daughter. The Misses Dominick are usually handsome girls, and are members of the Junior Cotillon and the Gendrilla and the Friday Evening Dancing Class. There will be an assemblage of the Jays, the De Poysters, Clarkes, Deland's, Schieffelins and others who are in this set, with a little sprinkling of Dodge and Stokes.

ON Wednesday also there will be the meeting of two dancing classes, Mrs. Quackenbush's and Mrs. Aletas Holmes—the latter a junior assemblage—and it will be at the residence of Mrs. Holmes, on Madison avenue.

celebrate the festival of peace and good will by the distribution of toys and goodies to many poor children and families.

THE Vanderbilts will have four Christmas dinners—at least there will be four branches of the family at different places. Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt will gather her family around her very quietly at the great Fifth avenue mansion. It will be a sad Christmas dinner this year. Mr. and Mrs. William D. Sloane will have a family gathering at the old Vanderbilt mansion. There will be present the two married daughters, Mrs. J. A. Burden, Jr., and Mrs. Hammond, and Miss Lila Sloane and Miss Jessie Sloane, the young daughter of Mr. Henry Sloane. George Vanderbilt is giving a big house party at Biltmore. It will be entirely a family affair, as he is in deep mourning for his brother. In the great ballroom there will be a Christmas tree for all the people on the place, and it is whispered that Willie Vanderbilt, disguised in beard and winter raiment, will impersonate Santa Claus. Mr. and Mrs. H. McK. Twombly, the Misses Twombly, Mrs. Elliott Shepard, Mr. and Mrs. Ernesto Fabbi and Mr. and Mrs. Brown, of Newport, will be in the party. The Frederick Vanderbilts and the Posts will have their Christmas at the Vanderbilt place near Hyde Park, on Hudson.

OTHER Christmas parties would include the family gathering at the Albert Stevens's country place at Westbury; a quiet reunion of the Havemeyers at their home in this city, where for many years there was wont to be a celebrated Christmas celebration, and dinners at Mrs. Bayard Cutting's, Mrs. Townsend Burden's and Mr. Adrian Iselin's.

THE dinners given by Mrs. Astor will continue through the Winter, every fortnight. The one this last week was very large, and the decorations were the usual American Beauty roses, and the gift service was brought out. The Astor dinners are delightful in point of menu. The guests were chosen from the inner circle, although Mrs. Astor has tact enough not to follow the rules too rigidly. She has her preferences, and has given her support to many new people whom she considers interesting, and particularly those who enjoy a position abroad. And this is the secret of her extreme graciousness to Mrs. Potter Palmer.

BAKED funeral meats seem to be somewhat in vogue just now, and it is rather startling to see people out in society who have but recently suffered family bereavements. The fashion for the mourners is to go to the opera matinees, and Mrs. Robert Goebel and others have retained their boxes for these performances. Mrs. Starr Miller rather surprised society by her return to it in so short a time after the death of her sister, Mrs. Alden, and, as already stated, the Vanderbilts will not be in the very deepest mourning this Winter. This, of course, only applies to the nephews and nieces. Mrs. Sloane, Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Twombly and Mrs. Shepard will, of course, be in the deepest of mourning, as also will naturally the Cornelius Vanderbilts and Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney. Thus it will be seen that the prestige of New York society will not be dimmed by the visits of the Grim Conqueror.

THE first week of the opera has been brilliant and not brilliant. The gowns in the parterre have been a bit sombre in color, and not the entire contents of jewelry boxes could save them from making the entire coup d'oeil of the house as attractive as in former years. Chauncey Depew, who seems to be in Washington one day and here another, was one

lately regal. The dance for Miss Harriet Wright at Sherry's was a pretty affair, and the guests were nearly all chosen from the Friday Evening Dancing Class. The Count Mercati and Miss Wright will be married at Cannes this Spring.

THE departure of Mrs. Frederic Nelson from New York in January will be the occasion of much regret to the many friends of that frank and good-hearted lady. Mrs. Nelson is certainly picturesque. She has now to consider the education of her daughter, Kathleen, who in two years will make her debut in New York society. This young girl is somewhat more a Nelson than a Gebhard. She does not promise to be the great statuette beauty into which Mrs. Arthur Knapp has developed, but, not the less handsome, she is of more delicate type. Mrs. Nelson still denies the many current rumors of her engagement to Mr. Larry Eldridge or to any one else. About the same time Mrs. Adolph Ladeburg will depart, so that with Mrs. George Law already over on the other side the transatlantics will have to beware of an invasion of extremely attractive widows.

In a year the lines will be so marked that members of one set will hardly ignore members of the other. The days of large general dances are over. Mrs. Astor's retirement from the Assembly was its death blow. It has been tottering for some time, but when, last year, it was whispered that she would go the way of the Patriarchs, Mrs. Cadwallader Jones became very wary, and so did Miss Whitney. Both these ladies represent a conservative element of society, and would like to have it kept up on the old lines when New York was much smaller. But it is impossible, Mrs. Astor, struggling nobly with the problem, has given it up. Mrs. Mills settled the fate of the Patriarchs and Assemblies long ago. Mrs. Astor was more loyal, in a way, to the customs of the past, and then it was the acknowledged leader of New York society for years. She only one rival, the late Mrs. August Belmont the mother of the Belmonts. I do not know what Mrs. Belmont would think of the present